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SUBJECT: Burkina Faso: 2010 Presidential Elections On the Horizon

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: Although President Compaore has been in power since 1987, following the 2000 constitutional changes, he is eligible to run for the Presidency one final time in 2010. Most observers expect a clear Compaore victory in the first round. Because the numerous opposition parties do not have access to the same resources (financial, logistic) as the party in power, the elections are naturally skewed in favor of the incumbent. In order to prepare for 2010, the electoral commission of Burkina Faso has published a tentative election-year calendar, starting with the revision of the registry in January 2010 and ending with first and possibly second round voting in November 2010. END SUMMARY.

12. (SBU) President Compaore has been in power in Burkina Faso for the last twenty two years. In 2005 Compaore was reelected to a third term in office with 80 percent of the vote. Because of constitutional changes (Article 37 of the Constitution was amended in April 2000) this term is in fact considered his "first" under the new constitution (Note: Each new constitutional change affecting the Office of the President takes effect at the time of the National Assembly vote and is not retroactive. End Note.) The Burkinabe constitution currently allows for two five-year terms of office. Most political observers believe that Compaore will easily win the 2010 elections. While elections in Burkina Faso have been described as mostly free and somewhat fair, access by opposition parties to electoral resources are limited and do not create a level playing field.

13. (U) In preparation for the 2010 presidential elections, officials at the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI), tasked with planning and running elections and referendums in Burkina Faso, have set the following tentative election calendar.

- January 1-31, 2010:

Revision of the voter registry (intended to update and correct the existing registry and draft a final registry that will gain cross-party consensus.)

- March 1-31, 2010:

Announcement by the Constitutional Court of the presidential election date.

- September 26 or October 3, 2010:

Publication by the Constitutional Court of candidate list.

- October 17 or 24, 2010 (at midnight):

Official opening of electoral campaigning (first round of the presidential elections.)

- November 6 or 13, 2010 (at midnight):

End of first round electoral campaigning.

- November 7 or 14, 2010:

Voting begins (from 6:00 AM to 6:30 PM).

13. (U) Electoral rules stipulate that if no single candidate wins the majority of the votes (51 percent) in the first round, then a second round will oppose the two candidates receiving the most votes in the first round. By regulation the second round has to take place within 15 days of the official announcement, by the Constitutional Court, of the first round results.

14. (SBU) COMMENT: We expect the number of voters to increase significantly in the 2010 presidential elections as a result of the new electoral law that gives Burkinabe citizens residing abroad the right to vote. In 2005, 57.5 percent of the 3.9 million registered voters participated in the elections. (Note: The new electoral law, Article 48 - Item 4 of May 7, 2009, allows for non-resident Burkinabe nationals participation only in presidential elections and

national referendums, but not in legislative or municipal elections.
End Note.) Compaore will most likely easily win the election in the
first round. The more than 140 opposition parties are not
sufficiently organized, nor are they sufficiently endowed
financially to compete effectively against Compaore. END COMMENT.

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